

## Whau to Avondale .... 1870 - 1900

### 1870s

Around 1870, the first Whau Hotel may have burned down, for by later that year James Palmer had set up a lease agreement with James Poppleton to manage the Whau Hotel he'd built at the five-roads intersection. The lease was for 3 years, at £2 per week, but before it could expire the hotel burned to the ground in December 1872. [information from *NZ Herald*, 1872]

*"It was in the beginning of the seventies that the **Great North Road** was formed and metalled from near the Mental Hospital to the Whau Bridge. It was the first formed and metalled road in the district."* [Events in the Early History of Avondale, author unknown, from 1920s/early 1930s, Auckland Public Library]

Whau Highways District Board discussed *"forming and metalling road opposite the "Whau Hotel" to its junction with the New North Road"* [west side of Great North Road from Rosebank Road intersection to Wingate St] on **3/1/1874**, and *"forming and metalling a portion of Great North Road from bottom of the hill opposite "Whau Hotel" to its junction with the New North Road.* [Minutes, 1874]

*"Between 1870 and 1880, Avondale was practically a day's journey from Auckland. Farmers*

*had to drive their produce to market through Grey Lynn over very rough roads."* [History of Avondale, class project, Avondale College pamphlet collection, 1952]

*"A temporary and unreliable planked **bridge** was present [across the Whau] in the 1870s to carry the very light traffic in what was still an extremely isolated and sparsely settled area. Most heavy freight being moved by water."* [Peter Buffett, *Western Leader*, 26/9/85]

By 1870, the **Public Hall** was regularly hired out to the community. Rent for an "entertainment to be held on any night to be 1 pound sterling per night"

In the 1870s, a Mr **John White** appears to have been a local **blacksmith**, featuring in the accounts kept by John Bollard for his Whau Farm from 1871 to 1878. To date, he's the first known in the district. He may even have started the forge up Blake's Street, which was later the **Myer's smithy** from the late 1890s.

In 1874 there is a record of a James Owen, "Engineer, Millwright and General Smith". [Bollard papers, held at Auckland War Memorial Museum Library]

### 1872

*"[The Post Office] was moved to a larger store at the corner of Crayford Street [Morris Bros.]. The mails came from the city by wagonette along the Great North Road, which was then unmetalled."* [Mrs. D M Davy, *The History of Avondale* essay, *The Advance*, unknown date]

*"The **Morris brothers** were operating a store and Post Office*

*on the south-east corner of Crayford Street and Great North Road in 1872.*" [Challenge of the Whau, p. 35] William Morris is listed as being the Whau Postmaster from 1872 to 1877. [Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

Among the customers of the Whau Store and Post Office, run by William Morris & his brother, was the Whau Public Hall Committee (and most likely the Board as well – from Morris Brothers invoices held in Special Collections, Auckland Public Library). The business could be seen to be the first catering firm in the district, as many socials and "quadrilles" in the Public Hall were supplied from the Morris Brothers' store.

The Whau Public Hall Committee chairman, John Bollard, moved a resolution that *"at any future assembly in this Hall, that any person having any connection with a Hotel be excluded from vending refreshments of any description, in connection with the Committee."* [minutes, 15/1/72]. This restriction was later lifted for a month on 7 December.

**The second hotel** burned down on **December 17, 1872**. This had been owned by James Palmer, on the north-western corner of Great North Road and Wingate Street. This building had two storeys, and like the first hotel on the other end of the township was of wood. [Challenge of the Whau, p. 37]

There was a full coroner's inquest into the fire on 28 December 1872, before Dr Philson, the City Coroner, and a jury headed by John Bollard. Although James Poppleton gave evidence that the fire burning down in the kitchen

grate was of no danger, it was revealed that Phillipa Poppleton, his wife, had left a dress hanging in front of the fire. The flames came from the side of the kitchen nearest the fireplace.

Poppleton was questioned by lawyers (whether acting for Palmer or the insurer's lawyers is unclear) as to whether he went to bed drunk that night. Poppleton denied that emphatically. He said that business had been better then than at any other time during the lease term. The verdict remained open, due to lack of evidence as to what caused the blaze.

James Poppleton went on to be licensee of the Eden Vale Hotel, corner Mt Eden and New North Roads, while James Palmer had his license renewed for the Whau Hotel in 1873 at a £20 reduction. [NZ Herald, 15/4/1873]

Surprisingly, the Avondale Jockey Club had a predecessor, the **Whau Jockey Club** in 1872. Meetings were held further down the Rosebank Peninsula, on Dr Aitkin's land, and the NZ Herald reported on 27 December 1872:

*The Whau – not to be behind the fashion at the present trend – held a turf meeting yesterday in Mr Aitkin's paddock. About 300 spectators were present, and the races were successful as far as they went, and creditable to the Whau. Mr A Dilworth officiated as judge; Mr Kelly, clerk of the course; Mr Stratford, starter of the horse races; and Mr Archibald starter of the foot races.*

Donkey races were included, and were said to be just like those in children's books.

*Through the destruction of the Whau Hotel, great inconvenience was experienced by visitors from Auckland, of which there were very many. No doubt when the Whau Jockey Club is older it will be in a position to offer better prizes; but success attended their efforts yesterday in providing amusement for the neighbouring country.*

*Challenge of the Whau* tells of another meeting taking place there in 1874.

[p. 41]. But by 1882 Aickin's land was being subdivided and sold, so the club would have lapsed by then.

## 1873

*"Palmer demonstrated confidence that ale would find a ready market in the young settlement of the Whau. Despite a financial loss of £400 (insurance £800, replacement £1200), he had a new hotel built within seven months. A housewarming dinner hosted by Palmer on **July 4, 1873**, opened the new 13 room establishment for business. [Peter Buffet, *Western Leader*, unknown date]*

**Temperance Movements:** On September 25, 1873, Thomas Barraclough wrote to the Whau Hall Committee, asking *"permission to use the Hall for purpose of meetings which it is contemplated to hold in conjunction with a Lodge of Good Templars about to be established at the Whau. Should the Committee grant such permission, satisfactory arrangements can be entered into with the Lodge for a proper contribution toward any fund required for keeping the Hall in repair, cleaning, etc."* [Letter in Bollard

papers, Special Collections, Auckland library]

This was one of the first signs of temperance in the district, a movement that would ultimately involve the local churches, and lead to the "dry" period starting 1909. The **International Order of Good Templars** started in America in the early 1850s as the Knights of Jericho (dates vary according to sources), and by 1872 a Lodge had been set up in Invercargill. It was Masonic in appearance, using similar regalia, collars and aprons (but these days does not).

*"The IOGT (formerly the International Order of Good Templars), according to one of their tracts, "offers GOOD TIMES through wholesome personal living; through a disciplined life of total abstinence."*

*Specifically, the IOGT promotes abstinence from liquor. As for good times: "we encourage sociability," the tract continues. "We like to eat, drink and be merry without intoxicants, with clear heads and feeling at our best."*

[From "The Teetotaler's Party", Joseph Hart, *City Pages*, p. 3, Vol 18, #839, published 1/1/1997, sighted at [www.citypages.com/databank/18/839/article3147.asp](http://www.citypages.com/databank/18/839/article3147.asp)]

Despite factions forming in the American lodges, the British ones stayed fairly well intact. Barraclough's letter talks of 21 members of the Order in the Whau district in 1873 (in Hall Committee minutes of May 1873, the group was mentioned as the "Excelsis Order", and in an article in the *Daily Southern Cross* the **Excelsior Lodge of G.**). By 1878, there were around 8000 adult Good Templars in the colony of New Zealand [See *Sex & Drugs in Colonial New Zealand*, by Steven Eldred-Grigg, 1984, p. 179].

According to S Eldred-Grigg, a New Zealand Alliance toward prohibition was formed in Auckland during 1886, and by 1899 included the Good Templars. Just nine years later, the Eden electorate, including Avondale, would be voted “dry”.

The Excelsior Lodge had a music group of around 14 people formed, called the “Pioneer Choir”, who performed at least once in April, 1874, in the Public Hall in aid of the Hall Fund. Thomas Barraclough, one of the members of the Whau Minstrels of the decade before, was part of the choir, singing solos. John Buchanan was also reported to be a member in 1874.

**Express coach bus** between Auckland and Avondale. This later replaced by horse buses. [Mrs. D M Davy, *The History of Avondale* essay, *The Advance*, unknown date]

*“About 1873 a Mr Phipps made an unsuccessful venture with a bus service and when this failed an express cart was used by a Mr Hazel.”* [D Ringrose, 1940, *Challenge of the Whau*, p. 22]

After nearly three and a half years, the **Whau Public Hall Committee** endeavoured to start up a library once more. A Library Concert in the Public Hall on **16 October 1872** raised £7, 8/- for the library funds. In November 1872, a list of 20 titles costing a total of £2, 11/- was prepared. The list was written on an A5-sized diary page for **November 7th through to 9<sup>th</sup>, 1872**, found by Auckland Public Library between 1956 and 1990 inside the minutes to the Whau Hall and Highway District Board

minutes donated by Mr. A E Bollard.

On **21 May, 1873** the **Whau Public Library** opened with sessions from 7 pm to 9 pm “for receiving subscriptions and distribution of Books.” W Forsyth and W Bell were to act as Librarians in the first quarter, and a Code of Rules was drawn up. [minutes, Whau Public Hall Committee]

The Whau Library received £7 ,10 /- in each year for 1873 and 1874 as subsidy [Journals of Auckland Provincial Council, 1872-74].

At a public meeting on **20 February 1874**, John Bollard stated: *“as the library had not been patronised so largely as it should have been when the charge for subscription was 2/6 per quarter he would suggest to the meeting that to make it more popular that it be reduced to 1/- and that a quantity of juvenile literature be introduced so that the fathers of families, being subscribers, could take one or more such books to their children.”*

Mr Francis Gittos (c.1843-1924) commented, regarding the sort of literature that should be available, that there should be books “for solid and useful instruction of youth in the district.” The Chairman of the Committee was “to expend £5 in procurement of such books.” [minutes, 1874]

“When the libraries first approached the [Provincial] Council for grants, they generally received a substantial seeding grant (usually about £10). The following year the amount dropped to as little as £2-£5. Subsequent grants would only have provided enough to purchase a few extra books on top of the

amount received through subscriptions, whereas the initial grant would have purchased at least 20-30 books. ...

*"It was the introduction of the 1875 and 1877 public library acts which activated the first real debates in New Zealand over library provision. Under the provisions of the 1875 Public Libraries Powers Act libraries were required to register as incorporated societies to ensure that they could legally accept donations and funding, and to enforce their rules and by-laws. The 1877 Public Libraries Subsidies Act created a mechanism through which the Government could distribute subsidies to libraries, carrying on a tradition established by the Provincial Councils. "* [Glenda Northey, *Accessible to all? Libraries in the Auckland Provincial Area, 1842-1919*, MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1998]

The Library continued, being registered in 1879 under the new Libraries Act, but when funding from the Government dried up from 1886 to 1897, the library appears to have vanished. By the time of the Avondale Borough Council in 1922, there was no library, and the Borough Council were seeking space to start one up again.

July 1873 saw the tragic death of **Rev. David Hamilton**, of the Presbyterian Church. His body was found on Sunday, 20 July, in Mill Creek, close to Whatipu, after he was reported missing on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Apparently, he'd lost his way while out journeying in the widely-spread parish, dismounted, then took the wrong turning and fell to his death.

His was the first burial in the then-newly consecrated **Presbyterian**

**cemetery** beside the church in St Georges Road. Today, a memorial pillar marks his grave, erected by grieving community members.

## 1874

The story of the railway in Avondale began with a series of plans made, then scrapped, over the course of nearly 20 years. The Stafford-Gillies ministry of central government in the late 1860s struck out a Kaipara railway extension from the public works list. Hopes for the construction of a **railway line through Avondale** towards the Kaipara were raised in 1871 with the survey of the proposed line after the plans were revived for consideration. However, by May 1874, the Provincial Council Superintendent advised the Mt Albert and Whau Boards that the government had decided not to go ahead with the plan.

In his April 18 1874 report on the proposal to the Minister for Public Works, the Engineer-in-chief John Carruthers wrote that his opinion there were sufficient factors, including the gradient of the land through which the line would pass (including the later famous "Scroggy Hill" in New Lynn), and that the area leading to the Kaipara Harbour was *"for the most part not suitable for agriculture, as it consisted of a barren white clay ... the line will therefore have to depend almost entirely upon through traffic from the west coast, which must be small until the country becomes more thickly settled than it is at present..."* [NZ Herald report, 25 May 1874]

At the time, it was the responsibility of the Provincial governments to fund the cost of railways through their areas, as per various Railway Acts in that period. The Colonial Secretary advised the Superintendent, J. Williamson who in a May 22 letter to the Whau District Board chairman John Bollard, stated: *"I have reason to believe that the data upon which Mr. Carruthers' report is based are unreliable, and I am therefore taking steps to ascertain ... a more accurate estimate of the traffic and commerce of the Kaipara district, and also between Riverhead and Auckland ..."* [NZ Herald report, 25 May 1874]

About 50 people attended a public meeting on this issue at the Whau Hall on Saturday 23 May 1874. Allen Kerr Taylor (Mt Albert), then a member of the Provincial Council attended and chaired the meeting, while others there included John Bollard and John Buchanan (Whau District), John Lamb (Riverhead), John McLeod (Henderson's Mill), Phillip McLeod (Helensville) and Joseph McMullen Dargaville (another Provincial Council member, and after whom the Dargaville township was named). Joseph Dargaville had started laying out his private town in 1872, and so was extremely interested in seeing the proposed railway come to pass. Dargaville, a timber merchant with connections in Auckland, was scathing of the Carruthers report and its author, stating that he believed Carruthers had merely listened to biased third-hand information provided by political interests in Auckland keen to see the proposal not go ahead.

The meeting resolved that it was imperative for the proposal to proceed, and that a petition from the residents of the various districts be signed and forwarded to the House of Assembly, "praying for the carrying out of this important work." A committee was formed, comprised of Kerr Taylor, Dargaville, Bollard, Buchanan, Lamb and others to carry out the resolutions.

## 1875

*"A road through the Mount Albert Highway District connects the Whau with the Mt Eden side of Auckland. The Presbyterian Church, in the centre of the township, is a neat building; and a public hall was built about 6 years ago, in which the Episcopalian Church holds divine services every Sunday. A school with about 50 pupils is taught by a first class certified teacher and his assistant."*

*"A spacious hotel was erected here recently, offering accommodation second to none in the province, outside of the city."*

*"There are three stores, a carpenter, and two smiths shops."*

*"An express plies daily once each way, by the Great North Road; and, by way of Mount Albert, an omnibus twice."*

[J Buchanan, *The Whau Village*, Wise's NZ Post Directory 1874-75]

*"It was perhaps about this time that **Henry Peck** established next to the new hotel in Wingate Street his 'Pioneer Bakery and General Store'."* [Challenge of the Whau, p. 35]. This store was later acquired

by Page [most likely after Henry Peck's death on 26 August 1890] as a branch of the Kingsland store, until the Pages Building early the following century. [Avondale Primary Centennial, 1970]

On checking family dates with two of Edward Woods grandchildren, Bob Browne and Muriel Wells-Green on 10 May 2001, I would estimate that **Edward Wood** was delivering goods for A. W. Page from Henry Peck's store in the 1890s at the earliest (Edward Wood was born in England in 1871, and didn't come to New Zealand until he was in his teens).

*"The first road formed in Avondale was **Rosebank Road**, to Wharf Road (Ash St)." [Mrs. D M Davy, *The History of Avondale* essay, *The Advance*, unknown date]*

## 1876

**Adult education** was a concern 125 years ago. Mr Joseph Glenny, the headmaster of the Whau School, wrote to the Hall Committee on 31 March 1876, asking:

*"In compliance with the wishes of a number of the inhabitants of this district, I propose opening **an evening school** on the 7<sup>th</sup> proximo. Will your committee have any objection to giving me permission to use the Hall for this purpose on four evenings of the week, viz. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday."* [Bollard papers, Auckland War Memorial Museum Library]

On the 4 July 1876, one Mr. Crook staged a show of "his beautiful dissolving views to a delighted audience" at the Whau Hall, before a quadrille party into the night.

"This was a magic lantern show, possibly featuring a biunial lantern perhaps powered by mineral oil (this means of light production for the lanterns had come into use around this time, and was popular for gatherings in small halls and churches.) These projectors were actually two-in-one, with two separate optical systems, holding a set of two slides which were made to appear to "dissolve" from one to the other. For example, a slide featuring a winter landscape dissolving into the same scene in the springtime.

[*Daily Southern Cross*, 5 July 1876; website for The Magic Lantern Society, sighted 12/1/2003 -- [http://www.magiclantern.org.uk /index.htm](http://www.magiclantern.org.uk/index.htm)]

James Palmer, by 1876, had found another hotelkeeper for the **Whau Hotel** in a Mr. Leon, possibly on a similar lease agreement as Palmer had had with James Poppleton earlier. A few hours after Mr. Crook's magic lantern show and the dance held at the Whau Hall, fire broke out around 4 a.m. in a large wooden stable and loft near the hotel. According to a *Daily Southern Cross* report at the time: *"The buildings are said to have been filled with hay and horse feed. The hotel had a very narrow escape, the wind most fortunately blowing in a contrary direction, otherwise nothing could have saved the structure."* The cause was unknown. [*Daily Southern Cross*, 6 July 1876]

By 1876, central government had apparently reversed the 1874 decision not to proceed with the **Kaipara Railway line**. Jack Diamond, in *Once the Wilderness*, describes a survey done on the line through Henderson, Swanson and Waitakere to Kumeu that year, and

the government started negotiations with the affected landowners along the route from Newmarket regarding compensation. For a while, it seemed that the level of compensation asked for by the settlers, for either loss of land, frontage, or saleability, would be used as an excuse by the government not to proceed. A meeting was held in Morningside on August 10 1876, attended by John Bollard and John Buchanan from the Whau District (both offering up land to the railway). [NZ Herald, 11 August, 1876]

## 1877

Further controversy dogged the proposed **Kaipara Railway** when it was suggested that the line from Newmarket follow a route via Ponsonby and Richmond, through to the Whau, rather than via Mt Albert. Yet another contention-filled meeting was held at the Whau Public Hall on 4 January, 1874, where it was resolved that the line via Mt Albert was supported and “the best one to adopt”.

John Buchanan of the Whau had offered the suggestion of following the Ponsonby line to the meeting, as he felt that would have meant the railway station would be more conveniently situated for the Whau district settlers (I’m unsure exactly which location Buchanan had in mind for the station. He may have meant for the line to cut along the western coast of the Rosebank Peninsula, thereby instantly increasing the value of the “Rosebank Estate” at that time being drawn up by the landowner there, Robert Chisholm. There was

a comment from the floor during the meeting, in response to the question put to Buchanan as to where he wanted the station put up, “On his own property, of course!”)

[NZ Herald, 6 January 1877]

A change in **postmaster** for the district came in 1877. “... Mr. George Thomas took over the postal duties, and a daily service for the transport of mails from the city was maintained by a wagonette, the Great North Road being then unmetalled. Mails for Henderson were made up at Avondale and taken on by a four-wheeler, driven by Miss Jenny Hassell, who was now a Mrs Osborne, of Freemans Bay.”

[Speech by H. G. R. Mason, Minister of Justice, 19 August 1938]

George Thomas was postmaster from 1877 to 1881, the last before the post office was shifted from the Great North Road store to the Railway Station in 1881. [Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

**Roads** were the principal responsibility of the Whau Highway District Board, and much has been said of chairman John Bollard’s concern for the laying of the district’s roads.

*“The Chairman spoke on the desirability of doing any necessary works as forming roads and culverts to where necessary during the month of November, as being the best time of the year for procuring the necessary labour and allowing a sufficient time for the consolidating of new roads previous to placing metal on them in April”* .[Whau Highway District Board minutes, 23/10/1877]



It was in 1877 that Cracroft Street, and the eastern section of the old Government Road, New Windsor, was formed. Also, the road “passing the Whau Hall and known as the Lower Manukau Road” was formed, complete with culverts. We know this road today as **St Georges Road**.

## 1878

**Population** of Whau Highway District: 269 [1878 census]

**Rates** were set at 7d in the £1.

Being a Highway District Board was limiting as far as jurisdiction was concerned. The Board’s function was the construction and maintenance of the district’s roads, but ever increasingly the needs of an urbanised society became more prevalent.

For instance, matters of health were of great concern to Victorian New Zealanders living in the townships. In 1878, residents of Mt Albert complained to the Whau Board concerning “a nuisance which they allege exists on Oakley’s Creek, caused by the drainage from Messrs B Gittos & Sons tannery.” [minutes, 23/5/1878]. Water downstream from a tannery would often run shades of brown, depending on the chemicals used in the process. Mt Albert farmers objected to the pollution. In April 1883, they were still “seeking legal advice re Oakley’s Creek”. Most likely, their lawyers advised that they had no powers of determining or enforcing health regulations.

According to John Gittos, in his sworn statement during the firm’s bankruptcy proceedings in 1891, “Up to 1883 our business prospered. In that year an action for damages was instituted for £1000 injury to water rights at our tannery. An injunction was obtained compelling us to stop operations there within three months. This paralysed our trade for 18 months. We had to pay £200 in order to compromise the action. Through this the tannery property was partly sold at a considerable loss to us.”

By February 1884, the tannery had left Avondale to start up afresh in Richmond, near Grey Lynn. This must have been a considerable blow to the local suppliers and retailers.

Work was well underway in November 1878 on the line from Newmarket to the Whau, with construction reaching Mt Albert, and a bridge built over the Oakley Creek at the Gittos tannery. There were some questions raised as to the suitability of the proposed site for the Whau railway station, however.

*“Another deputation will wait on the Minister of Public Works on the subject of the **proposed railway station** at the Whau. It is affirmed that the site of the proposed station is inconveniently situated for goods and passenger traffic, because it is distant from the centre of population, that no proper road has yet been made to the place [note: Browne St, or East Rosebank Road, only came into existence as more than a track up the hill in 1880, in time for the railway station – M Butler report], and that in other respects it is inconvenient of access.*

*The settlers urge that the site of the proposed station should be two or three hundred yards further on the line, where it would front the New North Road, would be more accessible for the bulk of the people, and would be contiguous to a well-metalled road. The proprietor of the land at the spot indicated has, we understand, expressed his willingness to give sufficient land for a Railway Station free of charge. [Evening Star, 20/12/1878]*

Needless to say, the siting of the station proceeded as originally planned.

In the *Wise's Directory* for 1878-1879, are found the following **proprietors and possible proprietors** operating in the Whau:

- William Davidson, bootmaker
- Ben Falgate, boot and shoemaker
- William Forsyth, carpenter
- J H Hansen, carter
- Fred Jones, engineer
- James Owen, storekeeper
- Charles Shannon, hotel keeper
- John White, blacksmith
- Joseph Wilkie, butcher

## 1879

In March, 1879, the *NZ Herald* noted that the ownership of the **Whau Hotel** and attached lands, had been transferred from James Palmer to Robert Dakin, a "suitable and obliging landlord", for a sum "no far short of £2,400." This effectively ended James Palmer's business dealings in the Whau District, and may have happened as a result of the mortgages from brewery companies on his lands elsewhere in the district.  
[*NZ Herald*, 22 March 1879]

One of the **horse bus drivers** of the time was a Laurence (sometimes spelled Lawrence) Teirney (1843-1915), who lived for a time in what is now New Lynn (close to the site of the Cambridge Clothing factory), then moved to Swanson. He was the father of Lawrence Teirney who operated a barber's shop and billiard saloon in the first half of the following century. He'd started in the trade working in the stables of Charles Quick (connected with Cobb & Co and the Auckland to Waikato run), then seemed to have branched out on his own. A devout Catholic, and lay preacher on Sundays, during the week he was drove horse buses along the Auckland-Whau route with an apparent aversion to overtakers. Mr Teirney apparently had an aversion to other users of the rutted roads passing him along the way. This, coupled with a quick, pugnacious temper, going by what the newspapers of the day relate, led to some startling incidents.

*"An accident occurred in Symonds St between 7 and 8 pm, which imperilled the safety of at least 1 person. A gentleman named Frost was driving a buggy, coming into town from the Whau by the New North Road, and passed the Whau bus coming in the same direction, and driven by Lawrence Tierney.*

*"The driver of the buggy kept close to the left side of the road after passing the omnibus. Tierney, in turn, improved his pace so as to pass the buggy, and the consequence was a violent collision, which smashed the lighter vehicle. Mr Frost was thrown out but beyond being covered with mud and a little shaken by the fall he has sustained no serious injuries.*

*The damage done to the buggy is estimated at £20.*" [NZ Herald, 7/11/1879, from M Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

Another report from 17 January 1882 was headed: "Obstructing a Thoroughfare -- Rival Omnibus Men."

"Lawrence Tierney was charged with obstructing the passage of Patrick Collins, Henry Holloway and others on the Great North Road on 23 December 1881."

It seems that Patrick Collins, another Whau driver, had left the City before Mr Teirney and Teirney caught up with him at the Whau Hotel. Teirney left 5 minutes before Collins, and Collins caught up with him at New Lynn *"near the stables where he stopped."*

Collins called to Teirney to *"give room to pass, but he (Tierney) kept to the centre of the road."* Collins then drew his bus onto a siding and tried to pass Teirney's bus that way, but Teirney thwarted the attempt by drawing across himself, preventing Collins from getting any further.

Then Teirney used his bus and horses to block the middle of the Whau Bridge, causing Collins to pull up short. *"(Teirney) stopped there for half a minute, and stopped again at the end of the bridge, and then started to gallop up the hill (toward the Whau township) before (Collins) got up to him."*

Teirney had been charged with obstructing a public carriageway under the Public Works Act of the time, but was discharged without conviction of that charge due to a

technicality -- the police had chosen the wrong part of the Public Works Act on which to lay the charge.

The *Herald* report did not stop there, however.

Teirney was next charged with *"conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace."*

He was accused of taking off his shirt at the Whau, and challenging Collins to a fight. *"Mr Lennox,"* the report advised, *"who was subpoenaed, was unable to come in. He was an important witness, but he was suffering from an injury."* According to Teirney, Collins picked the fight first, and he was backed up by a Charles H Smith and William Armstrong. Still, he was convicted and fined 20 shillings and costs of 1 pound, 4 shillings.

From around 1883 to 1885, Laurence was in Australia, either tiring of the farming life in Swanson, or getting drunk, gambling away his coach, and put on a ship bound for Australia from where it took him the two years to return. To date, there's no record that he resumed the omnibus trade.

## 1880s

*"In the early 1880s a Mr Morley had a shop on the southeast corner of the St Jude's Street/Great North Road intersection. Binsted's butchery was operating from the same premises a few years later."* [Challenge of the Whau, p. 35-36]

**Atkinson's drapery** was across Blake Street from Binsted's, and was, at first, a single-storey

building. The upstairs living quarters were later added. (The first house there may have been a business connected with Brown Barrett & Co, as seen from an old photo of the five-roads intersection and showing Binsted's butcher shop around the 1880s. It is known that John McKail Geddes and Herman Brown [of Brown Barrett & Co] owned land which later became Geddes Tce in 1903.).

*"There was 'Smiler' Atkinson, well known and liked all over the Ranges. With his cart piled high with merchandise, he travelled from his shop at Avondale to the various settlements, calling at the homes of settlers to show them the latest fashions in clothing and materials, and although perhaps a housewife did not have the money to purchase the enchanting things shown to her, she did at least see what her town sisters were wearing. His visits were also an excuse to break away from the endless routine of work, and were always looked forward to, not only by the housewife but the children as well."* [Once the Wilderness, Jack Diamond, 1953]

*"Mr Atkinson of Avondale was a regular visitor to Huia and he would arrive at grandfather's [William Higham, Huia's first postmaster] place with his horse and gig loaded with drapery, blankets, shoes and cosmetics. He would stay a night here, the next night at Mr Barr's in Little Huia, over to Whatipu for a night; here he would borrow another horse and go around the coast as far as his two wheeled vehicle would go near Zion Hill. The two horses would then be used as pack-horses to pack most of his remaining merchandise to*

*Karekare. A couple of nights here at Farleys boarding house, he would return to Gibbon's lodging house at Whatipu, catch a few fish off Paratutai wharf and then retrace his route back to Titirangi. This exercise would take place about three times a year – not without incident which could be rather daunting, I would imagine!"* [Early Manukau, Secrets of Yesterday, George Higham, 1990]

Up until just after World War II, Atkinson's drapery sold virtually everything you could think of: cottons, blankets, even maternity frocks. The counters in the shop were 5 foot by 2 foot, while the interior remained quite dark into the 1930s-1940s. [Conversation with Mr and Mrs Browne, 9 May 2001]

## 1880

### Auckland-Helensville railway came

through to the Whau on March 29, 1880. The post office was soon combined with the railway station.

*"... a timetable of two mixed trains daily except Sunday to Avondale, continuing to Glen Eden on Tuesdays and Fridays."*

[Source name unknown – in author's collection and Avondale Public Library]

In its first year of business **Whau Station** issued 1485 passenger tickets, handled 5190 tons of goods and earned a revenue of £355. [Tracks and Trains Through Henderson, by David Lowe]

*"Within eighteen months (of 1880) the price of land rose considerably and a piece of twelve acres bought for £350 a few years before was sold for £1,200. This was partly because the railway line to Helensville had ended at Riverhead*

*from where passengers were taken to Auckland by boat. After several years it was decided to build a line to Kaipara, through Avondale; and there was great rejoicing when the first train passed through.*” [Mrs W Ritchie, *The Story Of Avondale* essay, 1952]

*“In 1880, following the completion of the railway to Avondale, the post office was combined with the railway station, and the dual duties were undertaken by Mr. Leach. From that date onwards the mails were transported by rail.”*

[Speech by H.G.R. Mason, Minister of Justice, 19 August 1938]

The postmasters from 1881 to 1912 (when the post office was moved again, this time to the old Avondale Hotel building in 1912):

J Leach	1/9/1881	-
	31/8/1884	
H F Howard	1/9/1884	-
	14/6/1885	
H Bell	15/6/1885	-
	14/8/1889	
A Eyes	15/8/1889	-
	8/12/1900	
W A Ridgeley	9/12/1900	-
	10/1/1906	
J Hutchinson	11/1/1906	-
	2/8/1907	
C J Moon	3/8/1907	-
	16/2/1912	

[Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001].

The Highway District Board were informed by the Government that they were to “take over” the section of Great North Road in the district; that is, maintain it. The Board’s initial reaction was one of consternation, seeking legal advice from the Attorney General. On 8 September 1880 *“It was resolved that in the event of no satisfactory reply being received from the*

*Attorney General within the next few days, the Chairman be authorised to ascertain the legal position of this board in the event of any accident occurring.”*

On November 11, *“The Chairman stated that he had received £97 odd from the Government through Mr Tole, the Crown Lands Commissioner. He had calculated the distance from the Caledonian Hotel to Whau Bridge [total length of Great North Road from the City to end of Whau District] and found it slightly less than 6 miles. We have but 2 ¼ miles within our district. The gross sum granted for Great North Road [by the Government from the toll gates] being £260 he found we had got our fair share.”*

The concerns of the Board are quite understandable when it is considered that most of their revenue for the year 1880-1881 came from sources other than land rates, or even the new Dog Tax of 5/- per dog.

General Rates	
	£69.18.1
Dog Tax	
	£21.10.0
(registrar Mr J. L. Cox)	
Colonial Govt:	
	Great North Rd £97.
4.7	
	Subsidy £32.
1.6	
Share of Country Fund	£33.
0.9	

As the ratepayers were advised on 28 July 1881: *“Revenue was much less owing to a stoppage of the subsidy. The Board were called upon to take over Great North Road. Legal advice said we would be responsible for the state of that*

*road in the event of an accident, and so we were forced to take it on.*

Dog Tax money was spent on the roads, the Board were quick to assure the ratepayers, “and besides, we had no option but to bring it into operation.”

**Paterson’s horse-buses** flourishing (1880s). “These buses supplied the district with transport from Auckland to Avondale for some forty years. When the trams commenced running to Kingsland in 1903, these buses continued to run between Kingsland and Avondale. Some were double-deckers, pulled by six horses, and carried 25 to 30 passengers. Return fare from Avondale to City 1/6d. It took a team of 40 horses to keep the service running three times a day.” [Avondale Primary Centennial booklet, 1970]

“[Paterson’s service] brought the suburb into closer contact with the City and the arrival of the buses from there each day was an event of considerable importance to the local people, who were anxious to hear news from Auckland [History of Avondale, Avondale college class project, Pamphlet Collection, 1952]

“Grey Lynn Stables and **Avondale Stables** were deadly rivals and would do almost anything to gain the upper hand over each other, said Mr [Gordon] Barnaby of Barnaby’s Bookshop, Pt Chevalier. There was no service from the city past Grey Lynn except for these horse-drawn buses in those days. However, their end came with the extension of the tram service from Auckland.” [Western Leader, 13/6/67]

Regular horse-drawn bus service begins. Herald says, “a magnificent line of coaches drawn by well-

*conditioned horses that would be credible to any service in the world.”*

4 3-horse buses carrying some 18 passengers. A famous double-decker drawn by five horses, carried 35 and was used on businessmen’s run to and from City.

Buses completed the Avondale to City journey in 1 hour. After completing 14 mile round trip, the horses were spelled for the rest of the day. Horses cost £10 each, imported as unbroken from Australia, with a working life of eight years. (Sinking of *Elingamite* off Three Kings Islands, 1903, drowned dozens of horses bound for the Mt Albert bus service.)

## 1882

**Whau School** (shortly Avondale Primary School) opened on current site, 30 May 1882.

“... as [the Public Hall] was really no longer satisfactory [as the site for a school] the School Committee [Messrs John Bollard (Chair), John Buchanan (Secretary), William Morris, Thomas Sanson, William Forsyth] applied on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1879 to the Board of Education for consideration to the erection of a school building.” [Avondale Primary School Centennial Booklet, 1970]

This was finally “voted” or approved in October 1881, and on December 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year, the purchase of a site from Mr H Hassell was finalised of approximately 1½ acres for £110. Tenders were called 18 January 1882, and that of William Price accepted at £537 on 21 January 1882, for the construction of a two-classroom school. The

Board of Education's architect, and head of works for the project, was Mr Allwright.

The south-eastern corner of the site of the present-day School Hall was once that of the headmaster's house (until 1924), then the Dental Clinic/Reading Room.

At the opening ceremony, Rev. Robert Sommerville (of the Presbyterian Church, and then-Chairman of the Whau School Committee) attended, along with John Bollard, J Archibald, J H Bell and G. Thomas. John Buchanan and William Forsyth were absent. Also there were R Garrett, representative to "Whau Riding", and Mr A K Taylor, Chairman of Mt Albert School Committee.

*"The proceedings opened by the children singing a hymn under the conductorship of the head teacher, Mr S F Mayhew. The Chairman, in his opening speech, gave a graphic historical outline of the ups and downs of the Whau Public School, and the experience of the residents with the Board of Education ... The growth of the district and the increase of population had led the Board of Education, in response to the earnest agitation of the residents, to purchase additional ground (1 ½ acres) to that previously obtained for a school site at a cost of £110 and to erect the beautiful school house in which they were assembled. They had now a splendid school reserve of over 3 acres, with a school building which was an ornament to the district as well as a comfortable residence for the teacher adjoining.*

*"Mr A K Taylor, as a resident of 22 years standing in the Mt Albert*

*district adjoining, congratulated the Whau residents in the possession of their handsome school building. When he came to reside in the vicinity the district was almost a desert and its progressive condition showed what population and energy could effect."*

*"As one of the pioneers of the Whau district, [John Bollard] had looked forward to the event they celebrated for 22 years. The Whau School had had many ups and downs. It was first supported by school fees, then by subsidy from the Provincial Government. At last the Provincial Government got so hard up that it could give nothing. The district then struck a rate under the Common Schools Act, about the only one levied in the province, but through some legal hitch it could not be levied and the people were then at their wits end, what to do to provide educational facilities for their children.*

*"He and some other residents paid the rent of a teacher's house, and became responsible for the purchase money of 2 acres of the land which now formed part of the school reserve. The Board of Education had since taken over the liability and made the land a school endowment forever.*

*"Mr W Swanson, M.H.R. for Newton, gave a donation of £5 to provide a treat for the children on the occasion. Mr John Grey, lemonade manufacturer, had forwarded a large supply of lemonade and ginger-beer.*

*Refreshments of all kinds were provided in abundance in the classrooms and Mr Thomas, after the children had been well regaled, scrambled a large supply of lollies*

*amongst them on the green, which afforded great amusement.*

*"In the evening an entertainment was held in the Public Hall to celebrate the auspicious event. All the residents around were invited to attend. The Rev, R Sommerville presided. The programme consisted of songs, readings and recitations, which were much appreciated by the large audience present. The proceedings wound up with dancing, in which the younger portion of the assemblage engaged with much spirit."* [NZ Herald, 31/5/1882, from Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

**Local Authority:** now known as the Avondale Roads Board (until 1922).

**Avondale no longer the Whau.** I had thought the name "Avondale" may have come from the small village in Irish county Wicklow, where Charles Stuart Parnell was born, and county where John Bollard came from.

However, members of the Bollard family have shown a map to me of County Wicklow, which show the rivers Avonbeg, Avonmore and Avondale near where John Bollard was born in Coan, known as the "Meeting of the Waters" (a picturesque term that Bollard, as a land agent, would have been unlikely to miss as a future selling point to settlers), and the confluence known as "Avondale Demesne" (domain). I feel there is little doubt that John Bollard named Avondale the little nineteenth century village in Auckland after placenames in his own home Irish county.

It is also a possibility that Avondale is so-named simply as a "dale" beside a river, like Avon in England. To date, there is no definite origin to the name.

An often-cited theory that "Avondale" was the choice in honour of the then eldest son Edward Prince of Wales (Queen Victoria's son who became Edward VII in 1901) is highly doubtful. Prince Albert-Victor was created Duke of Clarence and Avondale on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1890 – almost eight years after the name-change proclamation (see below).

The path to "Avondale" took 21 months. On 8 September 1880, *"Mr Buchanan proposed and Mr Aicken seconded that the name of this Highway District, in the opinion of this Board, should be changed to that of 'Riversdale Highway District.' Carried."*

On 11 November 1880, *"the Chairman stated that he had received Mr Hesketh's opinion that the Governor's Proclamation is sufficient to change the name of the Township,"* and the matter was referred to the upcoming Annual Ratepayers Meeting.

At that meeting, 28 July 1881, *"Mr Buchanan moved, seconded by Mr Bollard that the name of the District be changed."* However, there was dissent. *"Mr Owen proposed, seconded by Mr Jones, that the name be not changed. This amendment was put and lost, after which motion put and carried."*

And then, there is nothing further in the minutes for over six months, until 8 February 1882. *"Mr Buchanan proposes, and Mr*



*Thomas seconded that immediate steps be taken to have the name of the District changed from Whau to Riversdale.” A bit curious, this, as the Ratepayers had already approved a change, yet the Board still had not taken action.*

*Then, on 4 March 1882, bad news: there was already another “Riversdale”, near Blenheim. “It was agreed that seeing we cannot get the name of the district changed to that of Riversdale because there is a post town of that name, that we apply to have the name changed to **Salisbury**.”*

*This idea was supplanted a week later, on 11 March 1882, by a unanimous resolution, “that the motion agreeing to request the Colonial Secretary to change the name of this district from Whau to Salisbury be rescinded. It was also unanimously resolved that the name be changed to **Avondale** and that the Chairman and Secretary are hereby instructed to take the necessary steps to accomplish this purpose.”*

*On 5 June 1882, the Whau Highways District became the **Avondale District**, as declared by the then Governor. [gazetted 8 June 1882]*

*On 17 June, the Board were advised of the gazetting of the Governor’s declaration of 8 June. This would be the last meeting of the Whau Highway District Board, from then on known as Avondale Board.*

*At this meeting, “the Chairman suggested that steps be taken to have the name of the Railway*

*Station and the Post Office changed to Avondale.”*

*This was also the last meeting at which John Buchanan attended. Up to now, he had been the Board’s secretary.*

*“In 1882 a **Mr Potter** was operating a service long the Great North Road. About the same time the Northern Omnibus Company started a service along the New North Road from its headquarters near the corner of Wingate Street and Great North Road. After an uncertain start and considerable competition from other operators such as the Grey Lynn Stables the service became a very successful one.” [Challenge of the Whau, p.22]*

*By 1882, three **mixed trains** (passengers & goods) ran each way daily between Auckland and Kumeu, leaving the city at 7.15am, 11 and 4.30 pm. [Tracks and Trains Through Henderson, by David Lowe]*

*Mr Gittos offered to place seats “at the top of the hill opposite the railway station” [minutes, 17/8/1882]*

*On 20 October, it was “proposed by Mr Garrett, seconded by Mr Gittos that the Chairman communicate with the Government on behalf of the Inhabitants of the District to have a wicket gate and path made from Cracroft St to Avondale Railway Station.”*

*As a sign of the difficulties getting around the district, at the same meeting these two men (in reverse order of motion and seconding) put forward that “bridges be made connecting Upper Manukau Road with Avondale South, and a bridge connecting with Avondale North.”*

In 1882, **William Hunt** started his brickyard on St Georges Road on land formerly owned by John Buchanan (called “Riversdale Road” in one newspaper report, possibly due to Buchanan’s influence). From then until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through many changes in ownership, the yard would be a source of work for locals, and is still a light industrial area today.

I include this unusual piece of Avondale history, found on a piece of paper from the collection of Mrs Elaine Bollard:

*“Notice of meeting: All parties interested in developing the resources of the Avondale district are requested to meet in the Avondale Public Hall, 7.30 pm Tuesday 1 October 1882. Business – To consider the desirability of thorough testing the district as a payable **coalfield**. “ Followed by a number of signatures, including F Gittos and John Bollard.*

Whatever happened, Avondale district certainly did not become a coal town.

A history of Avondale, apparently written by a Mrs W Ritchie in 1952 (part of a pamphlet collection in Avondale College’s library) has it that a quantity of fine peat was found near Pollen’s Point on Avondale Flats. This led to speculation that coal could be mined in Avondale, and “several syndicates were formed”. However, nothing was to come of it.

Avondale was not to be a coal-town after all.

## 1883

Avondale was now officially a **Road Board District**.

The Walton Estate (Allotment 63) was advertised for subdivision sale by B Tonks & Co, to be sold at public auction on Wednesday, 21 February 1883. From now on, the Robertson area of Avondale (Henry, Walsall, Robertson Streets) is to be developed and roads formed. [Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

The Board moved on 5 April 1883 to obtain “a **common seal** of a circular form for the District Board.”

At the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers, only 9 turned up. Rates were struck at ¾ d in the £1.

The Board also “looked into” making **Manukau Road** passable to light traffic. Up until then, only heavy wagons could handle the conditions of the road.

## 1884

**Northern Omnibus Company** operated between Racecourse Parade and behind Avondale Hotel, 1884. First instance of Wingate Street stables.

[Annual general meeting of Northern Omnibus Company, at Mt Albert Hotel, 29 December 1884]: John Bollard, Chairman, reported, *“As you doubtless know, we have bought a new omnibus at a cost of £120, and though we were unfortunate enough to lose a valuable mare, the horses generally are in better condition than ever they were. The new stables have been erected on a*

*piece of land purchased for the Company at the junction of New North and Great North Roads at Avondale.” [NZ Herald, 30/12/1884, from Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City Council, 2001]*

By 1899, this company had been supplanted by Andrews & Co.

## 1885

On 2 April 1885 *“It was agreed that the Road leading to the river from Rosebank Road at Mr Bollard’s and Day’s boundaries, be named Wharf Road.”*

This was to become **Ash Street**.

## 1886

Rates were now ½d in the £1. [minutes, 15/3/1886] By October, they were back up to ¾ d in the £1.

Under the **Local Bodies Financial and Powers Act**, the Board received £208.0.11 from the Government as subsidy. This was to become less and less each year, as the depression grew deeper from 1886-1897, and meant that the Roads Board were unable to do as much as they might have to maintain and develop the district.

On 13 October 1886, *“Moved by Gittos, seconded by Thomas that the Chairman be instructed to write to the Mt Albert Board protesting against the imposition of Tolls on Busses (sp) on the New North Road.”*

Gittos also wanted to have abattoirs for his tannery on the Rosebank Estate (formerly Robert Chisholm’s land, at that time being sold). The Board refused to grant permission.

It was from this point, as a Road District, that the Board began to have more powers than just the maintenance and construction of the roads.

In this period, the only transport for Pt Chevalier residents to the City was by **Potter’s Horse Coach** from Avondale passing through the Hall corner. The driver would sound a bugle as he approached the Point and again at the Northern Hotel to hurry along the laggards. [*Pt Chevalier Centenary*, Walker]

In 1886 **Henry and James Binsted** opened a butchery on the corner of St Georges Rd and Great North Rd. They also had an abattoir built on the present site of Rewa Park in New Lynn. Cattle for the yards were driven across the city from Remuera via Avondale to the yards. [*Western Leader*, 2/5/67]

According to Binsted family descendents, the parents of James Binsted, John and May, came to New Zealand in 1873, with six children. They started a butchery business in Drake St, Freeman’s Bay “before the reclamation in 1879, when Drake St ran along and parallel with the foreshore of the Waitemata Harbour.” [from family history notes, supplied by Mrs Molly Healy].

Corned beef in kegs were exported to the Islands from Freemans Bay, and advertised in the 1882 Auckland Directory as *“Shipping and family butchers, wholesale and retail, Supplied in any quantity.”*

James Binsted is said to have been a small-built man, who wore a bowler hat most of the time (some have said he was balding). His

shop had a cashier, where you would pay for the meat, and a counter where the meat was served. Binsted's delivered to a wide area, and were known to "dress-up" cuts of meat for those who couldn't afford the more expensive cuts.

In old photos available, meat can be clearly seen hanging outside under the shop's Blake St verandah. In the days before refrigeration, this was the best way to keep meat cool, hoping for a passing breeze.

The Rewa Park property (now named Ken Maunder Park) was bought in 1887. In 1916, "Binsted Road" leading to Rewa Park was dedicated by the New Lynn Town Board.

By October 1888, "Binsted's corner" had become an Avondale landmark, as the Board authorised John Bollard to extend the culvert to that corner. According to Mrs Healy, James moved to Avondale with his wife Elizabeth in 1889, from Well Park Ave, Richmond.

In 1895, Henry Binsted, James' brother and partner, died of typhoid fever, and their father John died on 8 March 1900. In 1902, James Binsted bought the Avondale shop from his family, and had a new shop in Mt Albert, corner of Mt Albert and New North Roads, by 1911.

In 1886 the **Auckland share market crashed**. [*Auckland Boom or Bust*, Auckland Museum, 2000, p.9]  
*"In 1887 the Bank of New Zealand failed to issue a dividend to its shareholders for the first time in its history .... The bank, along with*

*other lending agencies, was quick to take over land, warehouses, buildings, factories and companies it had a financial stake in, and the list of liquidations of entrepreneurial schemes was as long as it seemed inexorable. Auckland had more bankruptcies than any other city in the country."* [*The Heart of Colonial Auckland, 1865 – 1910*, Terence Hodgson 1992]. John Buchanan's warehousing business on Karangahape Road was caught up in the liquidations, and he may have sold his Avondale property soon after. September 1888 is the latest known reference by the Board's minutes to "Buchanan's land". Buchanan was adjudicated as a bankrupt in January 1889.

Another Avondale identity hit by hard times during this period was **James Palmer**, the owner of the Avondale Hotel, and donor of land for the Public Hall (1867) and to the St Jude's Church (1884):

*"It was agreed that if Mr Westneys pay ½ Mr Palmer's rate for the years '86 and '87 that this Board will forego the collection of the other half from Mr Palmer on account of Mr Palmer's previous gifts of land for the benefit of the district, and on account of his present financial position."* [minutes, 15/9/1887]

## 1887

In April, 1887, **Jessie Eva Hort Huxham MacKenzie** died, and was buried in the small Presbyterian Church cemetery on St Georges Road, opposite the Public Hall. She was the wife of Reverend Alexander MacKenzie of the parish. This should have been all of the story – except that Rev. MacKenzie had inscribed on

Jessie's headstone, these days perched hard up against the back wall of the old church hall's toilet/kitchen area (added later in the church's history):

**Sacred to the memory  
of  
Jessie Eva Hort Huxham  
Princess Torquil  
of Denmark  
Baroness MacCorquodale  
Of Loch Tromley,  
Chieftainess of the  
Clan MacCorquodale,  
And Wife of the  
Reverend Alexander  
MacKenzie MA BD.**

With this, Rev. MacKenzie gave birth to a persistent Avondale legend that that featured in countless books and articles since, spawned part of an episode of a national television programme in 2001, *Epitaph* by Greenstone Pictures, and involved international enquiries between New Zealand and Denmark.

Enough has been written about the "Avondale Princess" for me not to go into detail here. I would recommend reading the chapter on Jessie and Alexander MacKenzie in *Epitaph II*. But it is worthy of note that Jessie's headstone is still visited by the curious, drawn to the legend woven out of whole cloth by her husband from 19<sup>th</sup> century pseudo-genealogy. The mystique of the "Avondale Princess" will be with us for some time yet, hoax or no hoax.

From July 1887, the Board started to make **annual inspections** by wagonette of the district to check the roads, and any maintenance required. This was to continue right

up to the end of the Avondale Borough in 1927.

It was not easy being the **Ranger**. This was an unpopular position, despite being one of the first of the paid positions under the Board's control. The Board expected the Ranger to stop cattle and horses straying into the roads, causing damage to fragile footpaths, hedges and fences, while the populace at large strongly objected to seeing their stock impounded for such misdemeanours. In June 1887, there was a strong protest against impounding of cattle, and the Board capitulated for a time.

And then, came the **Gumdiggers Bounty**. The nuisance of the time was folk digging for gum on the public roads, leaving behind "gum holes" (including on the Great North Road) which were a danger to traffic.

*"It was agreed that notice boards be placed in conspicuous places in the district warning people from digging gum in the public roads."* William Lockhard, the Ranger of the time, *"on each conviction of persons digging gum on the public roads after the notice boards are erected ... will receive from this Board a sum of £1."* [minutes, 1/11/1887]

By the end of 1887, the Ranger was Mr John Lupton.

The first **electoral Returning Officer** was appointed, a Mr Seaman [minutes, 8/7/1887].

Mr John L. Cox the Dog Tax collector now became the first recorded **Rates Collector** (6 April 1887). Previously, this would have been the task of a Board member,

most likely the Secretary. In the minutes book covering from 28/7/1877 to 5/8/1891 (held currently in the records of the Bollard family, who kindly allowed me to read the book and take notes), the Assessment Roll of Ratepayers from 1868 to mid 1870s is in the front of the minutes recorded by John Buchanan.

*“As the traffic (to and from the west) increased the need for a more substantial structure ( **Whau Bridge**) arose, so the (Great North) road was re-aligned and in 1887, after the usual acrimonious discussions as to who would contribute to the cost, and complaints about Government inertia, a more substantial wooden bridge was constructed on the site of the present one. This bridge would have been built of bricks with a graceful central archway over the stream if Mr William Cantwell, representative for the Waikumete Highway District on the Waitemata County Council, had had his way. He nearly swayed the voting with his facts of the cost, permanency and beauty of a brick bridge, but his idea was over-ruled. [John T Diamond, *Once The Wilderness*, Lodestar Press, 1977]*

The Avondale Road Board had been advised by Waitemata County Council of the building of the bridge in November of 1886. By September 1887, the road to the bridge was under study for realignment by the Board, in consultation with Waitemata County Council engineers. [minutes, 1886/1887], and had been diverted by February 1888.

In October 1887 Robert Garrett died in office, and was replaced by Henry Peck, elected in his stead.

## 1888

The **Avondale Hotel** paid a £25 licence fee to the Roads Board. However, licensing districts were soon to be set up, and the license monies would soon go to other bodies.

In the early morning of 16 April, 1888, the third Avondale Hotel burned to the ground. The glow from the flames was apparently so great that it was observed from Auckland. James Murdoch, the licensee of the time under 10 year lease to Robert Dakin, his wife, two children and a servant girl all escaped unhurt. Murdoch stated he was awakened at 2 a.m. by dense smoke in the bedroom. His attempt to get downstairs was stopped by the smoke, so he got his family out onto the balcony, where he slid down one of the verandah posts, and grabbed a ladder to rescue the others. Murdoch was exonerated of any blame by an inquiry held at Avondale in May.

It is at this point that Moss Davis enters Avondale's history. He had apparently purchased the land which was to later form the first part of the Avondale Racecourse, and now, over the rest of the year and into 1889, the replacement Avondale Hotel was constructed – this time of brick and stone. It is this building that survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finally being demolished in 1967.

Moss Davis was a brewery and hotel owner across the region, and would have seen the acquisition of

a licensed hotel adjacent to a racecourse as a sound business move, as it proved to be until 1910, when the area went dry.

*“On May 18, 1888, the first letter carriers’ delivery was made on horseback, the postman being Mr [Ben]. Bollard, who now lived in Mount Albert. The delivery extended to the Mental Hospital, to Mount Albert, to the end of Rosebank Road, to a quarter of a mile beyond the Whau Bridge, and to Blockhouse Bay. [The round took more than a day to complete].*

*“The postman received £15 a year,” he said, “and had to provide and keep two horses! He was also required to deliver telegrams as a part of his ordinary duties.”*

*“The next postman had been Mr Sam Astley, and shortly afterwards Mr Leach was succeeded by Mr Amos Eyes as combined stationmaster and postmaster.”*  
[Speech by H. G. R. Mason, Minister of Justice, 19 August 1938]

**Borough proposal:** This was short-lived in 1888, but was sparked by a petition of 77 households in June 1888 against **night soil** being brought into the district. Night soil was then a main source of fertiliser, in the days before nitrates (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), and a source of income for Auckland City who sold powdered night soil (or powdrette) to farmers all over the region.

In 1887, the Board found a new limit to their powers, in that, short of being a full-fledged Borough, they had no power to stop night-soil shipments. The Board prevaricated over the Borough issue, and then

decided to take no further action in August.

In November 1888, the Board moved, *“that action at once be taken for the prevention of night soil being deposited in the District, the Chairman of the Board [John Bollard] having reported that a nuisance had been committed in the District by deposits of night soil. The Chairman to consult a solicitor.”*

## 1889

The solicitor gave the Board good advice as to how a little Road Board could take on the vast resources of a City Council regarding the **New Lynn “powdrette factory”**.

*“The Chair was instructed to write to the Auckland City Council and Messrs White & Partyer, objecting to the establishment of a night soil manufactory at New Lynn on the grounds that it will be a continual nuisance and detrimental to the health of the inhabitants of Avondale.”*

All well and good – but then the Board’s minutes go on:

*“And should the Council persist in establishing such works and send the night soil by road, this Board has no other alternative but to erect a **Toll Gate** and charge tolls in order to provide for the extraordinary traffic. Carried unanimously.”* [minutes, 13/2/1889]

There is nothing further in the minutes on this matter. We can only assume the Board’s tactic worked.

**Avondale Jockey Club formed**, in conjunction with Avondale Hotel.

Michael Foley, licensee of the Avondale Hotel at the time, had previously started a racing club at Taranaki, the Opunake Racing Club.

Construction of the track began a year earlier, in 1888, on Moss Davis' land and the first race meeting was Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1890.

*"Encouraged by the possibility of large crowd visiting the new racecourse and a likely increase in the population of the district, a number of shopkeepers began to set themselves up in the township."*

[*One Hundred Years of Racing at Avondale Jockey Club*, p. 10]

See entry for Whau Jockey Club under 1872 for Avondale Jockey Club's predecessor.

By now, there had been another change in **Ranger**, now John Ellington [minutes, 6/3/1889]. He left the post by February 1890, after several run-ins with locals. The new Ranger was Mr Owen McGuise.

The Board's accounts, up to 1889, were audited by locals, namely William Forsyth and H Bell. From 1889, the finances were audited by a Government-appointed auditor.

Further to the formalisation of Board business – the Secretary was from here on paid at £12 per annum – and Mr John L. Cox was therefore technically the **first Avondale Town Clerk**. [minutes, 9/5/1889].

The victory over the powdrette factory led to the Board resolving itself "into a **Board of Health**", and received an application from E Astley & Son "for permission to

carry on the business of tanners and leather manufacturers in the township of Wolseley in the Avondale Road District". [minutes, 6/11/1889]. Wolseley Township was at the western end of present-day Wolverton Street.

## 1890s

By now, **market gardening** had become pre-dominant on the Rosebank Peninsula. This would last until the 1950s, and Rosebank's industrialisation.

1890 to 1917 was the heyday for one of the West's more infamous characters, Randoff Sanfrisco Figuero, given to be either Spanish or Portuguese by origin, and better known to history as "**Don Buck**". He died on 5 August 1917, aged only 47, but he built a camp in the West for those cast out of Auckland City boundaries for crimes or drunkenness, the remittance men sent from their well-to-do families in the "home country" to earn a keep in the colonies, and the camp follower ladies.

According to Mrs Dorothy Davy, one of Avondale's earliest historians of the late 1960s to 1970s: "*The notorious Don Buck, a Henderson gumdigger, used to stop at an Avondale shop. One lady told me her mother would not let her children in the shop when Don Buck was there. He often had women with him that he was taking to the gum diggers camp.*" [Western Leader, 28/6/77]

From the Binsted family history notes:

*"Meat was ordered and then delivered from the butchery by covered cart. They went as far as the gumdigger's camp in Don*



*Buck's Road at Birdwood between Henderson and Swanson. This was the notorious camp of Don Buck. J. Claude Binsted remembered with some trepidation going with his father James, as a young boy, to deliver meat and collect money owing. It is easily understandable when you read that criminals made the camp their home or holiday camp, their drinking orgies, the drunken brawls involving men and women and parties that went on for days. The camp was an infamous place where criminals sentenced to be out of Auckland by sundown or those released from Mt Eden could find a haven."*

## 1890-91

*Wises' Directory* listings include:

H & S Binsted, butchers  
George Downing, blacksmith  
Michael Foley, Avondale Hotel  
James & William Forsyth, carpenters  
Edward B Kinlock, veterinary surgeon  
J Pacque, professor of music  
Henry Peck, baker  
John Potter, blacksmith

George Downing's smithy was on what was to be after 1928 the site of the Salvation Army Hall beside the Primary School on Great North Road.

[Conversation with Mrs V Crawford, 28 June 2001] By World War I, his name disappears from the directories, but Mrs Crawford's family, the Syers', came to Avondale in 1916, so memories of him must have been fresh to Avondale people then if he had already gone.

The first **Roads Engineer** was appointed, Mr John Boylam, on 7 February 1890.

In March, the Chairman was instructed by the Board, "to write to Carey & Co calling upon them to desist from washing their carts on the Bridge, or so near the Creek that the drainage pollutes the water in the creek or this Board will prosecute them immediately." [minutes, 5/3/1890]

Not having a purpose-built meeting room in those days was at times a difficulty. "In consequence of the Hall being let for a wedding party on Wednesday evening April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the meeting of the Board was postponed to Thursday."

On 26 August, 1890, **Henry Peck**, the owner of the grocers/bakery on Old Windsor Road (Wingate St) died, aged 47. His wife died young also, aged 48 on 11 September 1904. He would have set up business around 1870 (his shop features in a well-known photo of the second Whau Hotel), at age 28.

At the Annual Ratepayers Meeting of 17 September 1890, only 4 ratepayers turned up. The Board called it off, and had a Board meeting instead. By then, Henry Peck had passed away. [minutes, 17/9/1890].

## 1892

**Roads Board meetings:** In the 1890s, most of the Board meetings were held in the Public Hall, but occasionally they would use the Presbyterian Church, and use even the Avondale Hotel. The Board were charged 12 guineas (1 guinea worth 21 shillings) for the hire of the Public Hall from 1886-1892 at 2 guineas per year. [Minutes, 1/2/1893].

From 1895 to 1898, the hire cost was £10 10/-, while for the 1898/99 year it was £2 2/-. [Minutes, 7/7/1897].

**Collecting rates** for the Roads board was the job of the Roads Board Clerk, who was also the official Collector. In 1892 the salary was £12 per annum, plus 5 % commission on rates collected.

On the death of John L Cox, Richard F Bollard (son of the then Board Chairman, John Bollard) was appointed to the job. [Minutes, 8/9/1892]. He had to find 2 sureties who would enter into a bond of £100 “for the proper performance of his duties”. This probably because the late Mr John L. Cox, whom Bollard replaced, had inadvertently forgotten to account for £38 11/9 collected in rates (his widow later paid the sum to the Board, and received Cox’s last quarterly wage, less 25/-). Rates were paid in the 1890s at the residence of the Rates Collector – in this case, R. F. Bollard’s home in Princess (Elm) Street.

**Rates** were  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a penny (“3 farthings”) in the £1.

## 1893

The Roads Board agreed that “a **noticeboard** be erected in a conspicuous place for posting all notices in connection with the Board.” [Minutes, 31/3/1893]. This would most likely have been positioned near the five-roads intersection (now the roundabout).

Sale of the **Chisholm Farm**, Allotment 7, on 5 July by B Tonks & co auctioneers. This was **Rosebank**, from the Pollen Estate near the tip to Brown St

(Waterview) to the Great North Road, intersected by Rosebank Road. This was land north of Rosebank Road.

## 1894

On 10 January 1894, R F Bollard was appointed **dog registrar**. Dog tax was 5/-, with dog collars extra.

This was the first responsibility for the Roads Board outside of those of the former Highways District which had nothing to do with roads or the rates to upkeep them.

**Patterson & Co** hired brakes to the Roads Board (a brake was a large wagonette, for carrying 6 to 8 people facing each other – probably for the Board’s regular road inspections around the district. Cost for 2 years: £4. Pattersons also hired out traps, as in horse-and-trap, to the Board.

(69 Rosebank Road) A Mr. Grubb was a **baker** on the Rosebank Rd/Great North Rd (northwest) corner. His shop included area for stabling of horses. Before this, area just farmland. [M Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City Council, 2001]

The father of the Mr Grubb who started the Rosebank Bakehouse came to New Zealand in the 1860s, and set up a bakery in Karangahape Road. Unfortunately, during the Depression of the 1880s -1890s, he went bankrupt.

His son was a baker in the Northern Ireland Constabulary when he emigrated with his sister to New Zealand, following their father. Later, in Avondale, once he had married, he started the bakery.

Mr Keith Grubb, his grandson, told me how his grandfather would drink quite a bit, and would frequent the Avondale Hotel all too often and for far too long as far as his wife was concerned. Once, when losing her patience with her husband, she took a stock whip and went into the Hotel, clearing everyone out in her anger. However, Mr Grubb had seen her coming from across the fields, and was well out of the way. The licensee at the time, possibly Mr J Stych, banned Mrs Grubb from ever coming in and clearing out his hotel again.

John Bollard, during his time as the local MP for Eden, would often come into the bakehouse to talk to Mr Grubb – and would just as often walk out onto the street with flour all over his back from being heartily patted there by Mr Grubb.

[Conversation with Mr K Grubb, 16 June 2001]

The Roads Board minutes of 3 August 1898 record the resolution: "That the Rosebank Road and Great North Road at the **corner of Mr Grubb's property** be attended to in the same manner as the opposite corner known as **Harper's**".

### 1895

R F Bollard was appointed **district valuer**, at a fee "not exceeding 9 guineas". [Minutes, 6/2/1895]

Looking after **the roads** was, of course, the main responsibility for the Avondale Roads Board, and the Board took it seriously. They took care to set in place administration procedures to (a) see that maintenance was done when required, and (b) that the

Board was fully aware of the work undertaken.

*"Proposed by Mr Batkin, and seconded by Mr Astley that the following books be procured viz:- 1 small memo book, to be called the Surface Man's Diary; 1 Journal, in which particulars of Surface Man's Diary shall be entered by Clerk, to be transferred to Ledger.*

*"1 Ledger, in which shall be kept a separate account for each road in the district.*

*The Surfaceman's Diary to be handed to the Clerk weekly for the purpose of being entered in Journal. The Clerk to see that all items entered, posted in ledger and all books produced at each monthly meeting."* [Minutes, 27/3/1895].

In September, regulations were gazetted for the inspection of dairies. John Bollard was to attend a delegates meeting, to "watch for the interests of the **milk vendors**." [Minutes, 11/9/1895]

## 1896

What we know now as St Georges Road was called **Brickyards Road** for most of its length at least, due to the brickyards further down (present day Lansford Crescent development).

[Minutes, 5/8/1896]. J. J. Craig, who owned the yards in the 1890s, was from time to time brought to task by the Roads Board for damaging Brickyards Rd with his heavy wagons.

## 1896-97

*Wise' Directory* listings include:  
H & J Binsted, butchers  
Charles Brookes, bootmaker

John Burrows, watchmaker  
John Capes, fishmonger  
George Cowt, draper  
George Downing, blacksmith  
Michael Foley, Avondale Hotel  
James & William Forsyth,  
carpenters  
James MacIndore, carrier  
William A Pacque, music teacher  
John Paterson, bus proprietor  
Henry Peck, storekeeper  
George Thomas, storekeeper  
WC Thompson, boot manufacturer

## 1897

The Roads Board declared Charles Grosvenor the **district Returning Officer** on 10 March 1897. By coincidence only, Grosvenor would have worked annually in the wooden Public Hall, which was moved in the 1920s for the new Town Hall which, as a cinema in the 1950s was called: the Grosvenor Theatre. No relation.

To hire the Public Hall, the only **polling booth** in the entire district, for Roads Board elections cost £1 5/-.

The **Patterson horse stables** at 2059 Great North Road were burned down in 1897, according to a *NZ Herald* report of 14 November 1924. It seems **CT Pooley** took over part or all of the land by 1898, when he started hiring wagonettes to the Road Board.

## 1898

On 3 May 1898, after 28 consecutive years as Roads Board chairman, John Bollard steps down to devote his time in his new role as **MP for Eden**. (He'd been elected in 1896, and would stand until 1914).

*"Mr Bollard was essentially a big man, not only in stature but also in character and in worldly outlook. He was strongly imbued with such characteristics as made him beloved by all who came into contact with him. He was genial and happy, sympathetic and tolerant, generous almost to a fault, and a great lover of children. On his return from Parliament at the close of each session, one of [John Bollard's] first self-imposed duties was to pay a visit to the School and address a few words of wholesome advice and encouragement to the elder pupils. It is hard to say whether he or they enjoyed those visits most or what influence for good they may have had on the lives of those fortunate children.*

*"In his contacts with his fellow man Mr Bollard's characteristics won him the esteem and respect of all. No one in trouble or distress, irrespective of political colour or social status, appealed to him in vain. Indeed, many of his political enemies were his personal friends and he became known from North Cape to the Bluff as a man of sterling worth. He was widely known as "Honest John" Bollard."*  
[From typed brief biography, *Life of John Bollard*, courtesy of the Bollard family]

**Charles "Charlie" T Pooley** by this time was in the district, working as an occasional contractor for the Board. On 1 June 1898 he won a tender to provide "1- horse team @ 8/6 per day or 4/6 for half day, and a 2-horse team at 12/- per day (6/- per half day).

Locals found entertainment each week in the lofts of Pooley's stables on Great North Road.

*“There were dances in Mr Pooley’s loft on Wednesday nights. We drove there by horse and cart and what great dances they were!*

*“The girls took a basket and the Pooleys supplied tea. We danced the Scottische and Polka and Barn Dance to the accordion and mouth organ.”* [From *Memories of early Avondale*, by Tom Myers, *Avondale Advance*, 21/11/1960]

According to Mr Ernie Croft, Charlie Pooley used to cart logs from up the Waitakeres, and did roading work on Bollard avenue. He was a close friend of Mr Ernest Croft senior (later Avondale Borough Council member). Pooley’s daughter had infantile paralysis, but would still get around the district in a little cart pulled by two large dogs. Sometimes, so some I have interviewed told me, the speed her cart would go along the footpaths meant pedestrians had to step out of the way smartly.

Miss Pooley apparently was quite able to ride a horse as well, mounting by way of a special platform, possibly at her father’s stables on Great North road. At times, Mr Croft said, she would go droving.

Not much is known of Mrs Pooley, except that it is believed she was a faith healer. [Conversation with Mr E Croft, 19 July 2001]

Sometimes, there were never enough ready and willing volunteers for a community service such as serving on a Roads Board: *“The Chairman [Mr B Clay] reported that through the disqualification of Mr H W Batkin, a vacancy had resulted ... he’d instructed the Clerk to notify the*

*Returning Officer with the result that only one nomination was received, that of Henry William Batkin who was re-elected.”* [Minutes, 7/12/1898].

The licensee of the **Avondale Hotel**, John R Stych, (1845-1898) committed suicide on 20 December, shooting himself in the head with a shot-gun in the cellar of the Avondale Hotel. He was apparently in financial difficulties, and after being approached that afternoon by a Mr. Boylan and Mr Abbott, he went to get a revolver and shot-gun, and ended his life. The suicide, and resulting inquest presided over by John Bollard as district coroner, was quite a sensation in Avondale at the time, so much so that it went into “Avondale lore” as the suicide of the last publican after losing the hotel licence in 1909. Only after I interviewed Mrs Vera Crawford, and she mentioned the name “Mr Stych”, was I able to put Mr Stych’s death together with the suicide story – a part of Avondale lore which turned out to have more than a grain of truth to it.

His widow Emma took over the licence for 5 years.

*“The deceased was very popular in the Avondale district and was not supposed a likely man to commit suicide. He had many friends in Auckland, where for many years he was employed in Messrs Bycroft and Co.’s mills. As a horticulturalist Mr Stych used to carry off prizes year after year at the local flower shows and was an enthusiastic gardener. He leaves a wife and three sons.”* [Auckland Star, 21/12/1898]

John Stych was buried in the Rosebank Cemetery, his headstone giving no indication of the cause of his demise.

## 1899

Mr Hardress J. Evans became the **dog registrar** on 4 January 1899, and was granted 10/- 10d commission on dog collar sales. As there was **no bank** in Avondale, Evans was granted a day's wage (5/-) to bank the monies collected in Dog Tax. [Minutes, 1/3/1899]

**1<sup>st</sup> February 1899:** It was resolved by the Avondale Road Board that “a **footpath** ten feet wide with wooden kerbing from the Avondale Hotel bar door to the racecourse entrance.” The racecourse entrance and grandstands were at that time off Wingate Street, not far from the hotel. [*Challenge of the Whau*, p. 20]

The **Rosebank Road footpaths** were to be formed soon after the beginning of June 1899 (interestingly, in the middle of winter) – on the side from partly up Station Hill down to Victoria Road (Victor St). The Roads Board pledged to spend £10 if residents put in labour and money to the same amount.

On 4 October 1899, R F Bollard resigned as Board Clerk. Land agent Fred Bluck gets the position. By then, Bluck, unlike his predecessor, had to only find 1 surety of £100 bond. He was appointed Returning Officer as well on 4 April 1900.

A special “**racecourse platform**” had been installed by the Railways

on their land between Cracroft Street and Blake Street [this by the way is the first record found of the reversion of name back to Blake Street]. The Road Board complained as they wanted to open up Layard Street. [Minutes, 1/11/1899]

**Andrews & Co** are mentioned in the *Auckland Star* of December 2, 1899 as inaugurating horse bus services to Avondale South, and a “new tourist route” to Nihutapu and the Waitakere Ranges. Their stables may have been the earlier ones between Racecourse Parade and the hotel, previously owned by the Northern Omnibus Company.

